

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A
SUBJ: REIMBURSABLE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

1. IN THE ABSENCE OF FURTHER WORD FROM WASHINGTON ABOUT A FULL TIME REPLACEMENT FOR THE REIMBURSABLE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM OFFICER (WHO DEPARTED IN SEPTEMBER 1976), THE EMBASSY HAS TAKEN STOCK OF THE PROGRAM HERE AS CARRIED OUT WITH THE STAFF WE NOW HAVE. WE SEE A NUMBER OF PROBLEMS WHICH WOULD BE ATTENUATED OR SOLVED WITH THE APPOINTMENT OF A FULL TIME OFFICER WITH AID EXPERIENCE WHO IN CONVERSANT IN SPANISH. IF SUCH AN ASSIGNMENT IS NOT PLANNED IN THE NEAR FUTURE, WE BELIEVE A REDEFINITION FROM WASHINGTON IS IN ORDER REGARDING THE SCOPE OF RDP HERE. THE PROBLEMS WE FACE WITH THE PART-TIME OFFICER ARRANGEMENT ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. WE ARE ABLE TO CARRY OUT A RESPECTABLE PROGRAM OF INITIAL CONTACTS BUT FIND THAT EVEN WHERE VENEZUELANS ARE ENTHUSED THEY LACK DEFINITION ABOUT WHAT THEY NEED, AND CONSTANT FOLLOW-UP IS NECESSARY.
2. NOT ONLY DOES THE EFFORT HERE NEED TO BE UNREMITTING AND WIDE RANGING, BUT IT IS DIFFICULT TO COORDINATE THE UNITED STATES AND VENEZUELAN BUREAUCRACIES, FIND THE RIGHT EXPERT, AND MAKE SURE THE EXPERT AND THE VENEZUELANS UNDERSTAND ONE ANOTHER. THIS IS PARTICULARLY TRUE GIVEN THE ABOVE-MENTIONED VENEZUELAN PENCHANT TO EXHIBIT AN INITIAL ENTHUSIASM WHICH FADES QUICKLY AND GETS LOST IN BUREAUCRATIC INEFFICIENCIES.

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3. ON OCCASION, THE EXPERTS SENT TO VENEZUELA HAVE NOT ALWAYS MATCHED THE NEED, AND THE RESULTING LOCAL DISSAPPOINTMENT HAS PRECLUDED FURTHER PROGRESS. TO AVOID THIS REQUIRES MUCH MONITORING BY THE RDP OFFICER AND INTERVENTION TO FRESTALL A BAD RESULT OR TO MINIMIZE ITS EFFECTS.

4. UNLESS CONVINCED THAT RDP IS THE BEST CHANNEL, AND THE EMBASSY CAN DEVOTE SUFFICIENT TIME TO THEIR NEEDS, THE PROSPECTIVE VENEZUELAN USERS WOULD RATHER OBTAIN EXPERTS ON THEIR OWN SINCE THEY HAVE TO PAY FOR THEM IN EITHER CASE AND MANY HAVE HAD EXPERIENCE WITH CONSULTING FIRMS OR COMPANIES THAT PROVIDE SERVICES SIMILAR TO RDPS.

5. WE SEE SOME FUZZING OF MOTIVES FOR THE RDP PROGRAM. THE MOTIVES APPEAR TO US TO BE THREE-FOLD: DEVELOPMENTAL, POLITICAL AND COMMERCIAL.

WE HAVE MAINTAINED AND CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT THE MOST SUCCESSFUL APPROACH IS TO STRESS THE TECHNICAL TRANSFERS WHICH WILL BENEFIT DEVELOPMENT. THE POLITICAL RESULTS FOLLOW AND DEPEND ON THE SUCCESS OR LACK THEREOF OF THE PROJECTS. THE SALE OF U.S. GOODS AND SERVICES SHOULD BE THE END RESULT BUT NOT THE INITIAL MOTIVATION.

6. WE DOUBT THAT THE PROBLEM OF THE COSTS TO VENEZUELA IS A CRUCIAL AS IT IS IN OTHER MIDDLE INCOME COUNTRIES. VENEZUELA DOES HAVE THE MONEY IF THEY ARE CONVINCED OF THE NEED AND HAVE BEEN LED TO A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF HOW RDP CAN UNIQUELY HELP THEM, AND IF THE MOMENTUM IN THE BUREAUCRACY CAN BE MAINTAINED BY FOLLOW UP.

7. EMBASSY CONTINUES TO BELIEVE THAT THERE IS POTENTIAL FOR THE RDP PROGRAM IN VENEZUELA. SOME VENEZUELAN CLIENTS WANT USG COORDINATION OF THE CONSULTING PROCESS BELIEVING THAT THE US GOVERNMENT
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CAN OFFER BROADER GAUGE AND MORE DISPASSIONATE ADVICE THAN A PRIVATE CONSULTANT. HOWEVER, A FULL TIME OFFICER WITH THE PROPER EXPERIENCE AND CONCENTRATING ON VENEZUELA IS NECESSARY IF THESE AND OTHER POSSIBILITIES FOR RDP ARE TO BE FULLY REALIZED.
VAKY

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Disposition Event:
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